



Free Special Education Resources, Consultation, Trainings

Your Arizona Parent School Connection

Emotional Disability

What is an Emotional Disability?

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) § 15-761 (6), “ ‘Emotional disability’:

(a) Means a condition whereby a child exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects the child's performance in the educational environment:

(i) An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors.

(ii) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

(iii) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

(iv) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

(v) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(b) Includes children who are schizophrenic but does not include children who are socially maladjusted unless they are also determined to have an emotional disability as determined by evaluation...”

According to the proposed regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) Amendments, 34 CFR 300.8 (c)(4)(ii), states that "the term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section."

How Common is an Emotional Disability?

In the 2005-2006 school year, 6,760 Arizona students were classified as having an emotional disability (ED) and received special education services. This number represents 0.67% of the 1,004,009 students enrolled in Arizona public schools as of October 1, 2005 and accounts for 5.5% of the total special education population.

What Effect Does an Emotional Disability Have on a Child?

Children with emotional disabilities generally have difficulty learning in a conventional setting. Some children with severe emotional disabilities score poorly on tests of intellectual ability. Children with ED are found to respond to educational models with varying degrees of success. Heward lists several categories of models used in teaching students with severe emotional disabilities. These include: psychotherapy, therapeutic discussion, social interaction, and behavior modification.

Behavior modification is frequently seen as useful in shaping behaviors and developing social skills that are more acceptable to society and are prerequisites to academic learning in the classroom. This technique can be utilized to help individuals develop the ability to pay attention, follow directions, and complete assignments. Other techniques found to be useful include medical and nutritional approaches. Behavior Plans that target specific educational needs are essential to classroom success.

Often the program will be a combination of several of these mentioned. Some Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams include counseling by qualified personnel as a related service for students and parents. Support for classroom educators can also be provided to enable a child to benefit from an inclusive educational program.

While early intervention improves chances for success, tests alone are not always reliable for diagnosing emotional disabilities. Multiple measures (including observation in multiple settings) by a variety of people help give an accurate picture of the extent of the emotional condition. Use of a functional behavioral assessment can identify triggers to unwanted behavior so an effective behavioral intervention plan can be designed. It's important for the family to work closely with the school and other providers in a joint approach to reduce the effects of the condition on the child both educationally and socially.

References

Heward, William L. (2002). *Exceptional children: Introduction to special education*. (7thed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ; Prentice Hall.

Resources

Books

- Baker, P.L. & Brightman, A.J. (2004). *Steps to independence: Teaching everyday skills to children with special needs*. Baltimore, MD:Brookes Publishing, www.brookespublishing.com
- Batshaw, M.D., M. (2001). *When your child has a disability: A complete sourcebook of daily and medical care*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing, www.brookespublishing.com
- Clark, Hewitt B. Ph.D. and Davis, Mary Ann Ph.D. (2000). *Transition to adulthood: A resource for assisting young people with emotional or behavioral difficulties*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Falvey, M. (2005). *Believe in my child with special needs!, Helping children achieve their potential in school*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing, www.brookespublishing.com
- Greene, R.S. (2001). *The explosive child: A new approach for understanding and parenting easily frustrated chronically inflexible children*. New York:Harper Collins www.harpercollins.com/hc/home.asp
- Jordan, D. (2001), *A guidebook for parents of children with emotional or behavioral disorders* (3rd ed.), Minneapolis, MN: PACER, www.pacer.org

Audio & Video Tapes

- Fanlight Productions, 4196 Washington St., Boston, MA 02131, 800-937-4113, www.fanlight.com
- Program Development Associates, P.O. Box 2038 Syracuse, NY 13220-2038, 800-543-2119, www.disabilitytraining.com

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

- Arizona Department of Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services, 150 N. 18th Ave., #200, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-364-4558 www.azdhs.gov/bhs
- Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 5262 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5262, www.pbis.org
- Mental Health Association of Arizona, 6411 E. Thomas, Scottsdale, AZ 85251, 480-994-4407, 800-642-9277, www.mhaarizona.org
- M.I.K.I.D. (Mentally Ill Kids in Distress), E. Willetta, Ste. 128, Phoenix, AZ 85006, 602-220-9846, 800-35-MIKID, 1905 E. 7th St., Bldg. 4, Tucson, AZ 85705, 520-882-0142, www.mikid.org
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) AZ, 2210 N. 7th St., Phoenix, AZ 85006-1604, 800-626-5022, www.nami.org
- National Center for Kids Overcoming Crisis, 800-8KID-123, www.kidspeace.org
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013, 800-695-0285, www.nichcy.org
- National Institute of Mental Health (Public Inquiries), 6001 Executive Blvd., Room 8184, MSC 9663, Bethesda, MD 20892-9663, 866-615-6464, www.nimh.nih.gov/
- PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044, 952-838-9000, 800-537-2237, www.pacer.org
- Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-542-3852, 800-352-4558, www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals
- Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central, Ste. 200, Phoenix, AZ 85004-1313, 602-242-4366, 800-237-3007, www.raisingpecialkids.org